

# Little Acorns Day Nursery Day Care of Children

Royal Cornhill Hospital  
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Aberdeen  
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Telephone: 01224 557 457

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
25 August 2021

**Service provided by:**  
NHS Grampian

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000363

**Service no:**  
CS2003001643

## About the service

Little Acorns Day Nursery is provided by NHS Grampian for the benefit of NHS staff. The service has been registered since 1 April 2002, to provide a day care of children service for a maximum of 108 children at any one time from birth to those not yet attending primary school.

The service operates from a modern, two storey, purpose-built accommodation within the grounds of the Royal Cornhill Hospital, Aberdeen. Children have daily access to the safe and enclosed nursery gardens. The older children have daily access to the recently developed woodland area. This area is enclosed, safe and provides children with magical and imaginative experiences.

Registration Conditions specify:

A maximum of 17 children aged 0 to under 18 months may be cared for in Room 1 on the ground floor.  
A maximum of 18 children aged one to 36 months may be cared for in Room 2 on the ground floor.  
A maximum of 33 children aged two to three years six months may be cared for in Room 3 on the first floor.  
A maximum of 40 children aged three to those not yet attending primary school may be cared for on the first floor.

The care service will operate between the times of 07:00 and 18:00, Monday to Friday.

The service will comply with the following staffing age of children/ratios: Adults to Children: 0 to under two years 1:3; two to under three years 1:5; three years and over 1:8. A minimum of two adults to be on duty at any one time (only adults in contact with the children for the majority of the session should count towards the ratios).

The main aim of Little Acorns is to "provide a happy, caring, stimulating and safe environment for our children which supports them through offering freedom to choose, opportunities to develop at their own pace, and meet their needs in a respectful way."

We carried out site visits to the service on the 21 July and 10 August 2021 and completed the inspection using telephone calls, virtual meetings, and the submission of documents. Feedback was given on the 25 August 2021.

This inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

The Care Inspectorate check services are meeting the principles of 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (also known as GIRFEC); Scotland's national approach to improving outcomes and wellbeing for children by offering the right help at the right time from the right people. It supports them and their parent(s) to work with services that can help them. There are eight wellbeing indicators at the heart of GIRFEC: Safe; healthy; achieving; nurtured; active; respected; responsible; and included.

## What people told us

When we arrived, all children were outdoors playing in the nursery gardens or wooded area.

All children playing in the gardens were having great fun as they engaged in their chosen activity. These ranged from craft, playing table top games, listening to stories or making pizza for snack!

The older children played imaginatively and creatively in the wooded area, exploring and experimenting with their friends. Children told us they liked going to Little Acorns nursery.

The nursery manager provided us with contact details of 24 parents. We spoke with one parent at the inspection in the outdoors and contacted six parents via email, and received three responses. Parents provided us with detailed information about their child's experiences at Little Acorns.

Comments are below:

"We get weekly emails from the manager; regulation changes and updates on policies and things."

"Everything clear and succinct. Daily updates. What my child ate and did. Weekly magazines with what the children have been doing with pictures."

"Can't fault the manager. From what I can see, I don't think there's anything more they could do. I have 100% trust in this place. We've been super lucky to have got our child in here. We are super happy. I must say this place is 100%."

"Staff so nice."

"They're always busy and are outdoors pretty much all the time. A real asset. Great wooded area."

"My child really loves her time at nursery and has built up strong relationships with the staff members who are all warm and caring with her. Staff always make time to feedback little anecdotes about her day and speak of her with positive regard."

"Having known a number of the staff team for a number of years, they are friendly, child focused and aware of how to promote positive attachment experiences for the children, who can be distressed on starting nursery, or changing their nursery room as they leave familiar adults behind and have to establish new relationships. I have observed staff members holding and cuddling upset children to sleep, letting them nap on a staff member if that is what the child has needed, and they have always been really supportive of having myself or my husband phone to check in on how our child has settled during the transition to start nursery."

"Staff are flexible in meeting the needs of my child, for example, if I drop her off and she hasn't eaten much for breakfast at home, but nursery snack is not yet ready, then I know that if I ask, they will find her something to eat."

"The staff are continually coming up with new and creative ideas to give the children new learning and sensory experiences and my child comes home ready to tell me all about what she has been up to."

"Communication is good, with daily activity sheets detailing what my child has been involved in, and pictures of her and her friends taking part in activities, so there's always a way for me to ask my child about parts of her play that day."

"Regular newsletters keep us up-to-date with the nursery news. E-mails I send to nursery about my child, or other matters are always responded to in a timely and helpful manner. The nursery team have communicated really well throughout lockdown and have worked tirelessly to ensure that our children are safe and looked after so that we as NHS frontline staff, can continue to work, knowing that our children are safe and well."

"I understand the nursery to be extremely well managed and we cannot imagine a better experience for my child to be having at a nursery. We are very satisfied with all areas."

"I feel that the staff are very approachable, and the office staff are very good at communicating with parent via emails to tell us what is going on in the nursery. The manager is very helpful, and she responds to emails/phone calls very quickly."

"My child is coming on a lot and confident in the nursery setting, she also appears to be very happy with all the staff."

"My child loves her time at the nursery, she is also confident at nursery. I think as a parent I found it difficult to see the children in bubbles, (I know this is due to Covid) so they were always with the same children."

"I always had lots of positive feedback about my child, but if she had been sad/frustrated about something this wasn't always fed back and sometimes, she found it difficult to tell us."

"I'm sure this is the same for the staff, but it was much easier to get a feel of what was going on and for parents to get to know the staff when the handover was face to face, rather than the handover sheets. Again, I know this is due to Covid, also it appeared to give the staff more paperwork."

"The staff appear to have good interactions with both my children."

"Both my children have equally loved the nursery and have been offered numerous memorable experiences."

"I have found the staff to be extremely approachable and transparent. There is high level of consistency with staffing, which I believe is extremely important for young children."

"The management team are extremely approachable and have an open-door policy. I have found the level of communication to be high, with weekly emails, updates about changes and also help navigating the financial side of nursery fees. I have found the team to be proactive, organising family events and overall being inclusive."

"The staff all have a good knowledge base in regard to child development and attachment theory. When I was having difficulties with my child when he was experiencing normal separation anxiety, the staff were extremely kind, compassionate and helped make plans to help my child. I have found the staff to be professional and when working through a pandemic they adapted quickly to every changing situation."

"I have never been unhappy or dissatisfied."

## Self assessment

The service had not been asked to complete a self-assessment in advance of the inspection. We asked the service to share their paperwork via email.

We looked at the paperwork used to identify and progress improvements, as well as quality assurance documents and evaluations. These demonstrated management and staffs priorities and their commitment to develop and improve the service and outcomes for children.

## From this inspection we graded this service as:

|                                      |               |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| Quality of care and support          | 5 - Very Good |
| Quality of environment               | 5 - Very Good |
| Quality of staffing                  | 5 - Very Good |
| Quality of management and leadership | 5 - Very Good |

## Quality of care and support

### Findings from the inspection

Management and staff had created a very positive ethos, with children and families placed at the centre of their work. Children were nurtured, valued and respected during their time at nursery. Staff knew children and their families well and meaningful, trusting relationships had been established. Strong nurturing approaches were firmly embedded in staff practice. Staff used effective ways to support children's emotional health and wellbeing and as such, children were thriving in their care.

Personal plans were in place for each child and contained a range of information, including medical and dietary requirements. This information supported and guided staff to take appropriate action when required to do so, and contribute towards keeping children safe and well.

Staff spoke confidently and knowledgeably about children's medical and allergy conditions. We found staff supported children with additional support needs very well, at times using songs and games to settle them.

Medication systems followed best practice, ensuring that those children who required medication were dealt with safely and confidently.

Staff knew the children very well and reflected confidently on their learning and development needs and how they supported them to achieve. Children's electronic learning journeys reflected their individual achievements, progress and next steps. These were regularly shared with parents who also contributed to their journey, sharing achievements and videos.

Children directed their own play, freely choosing and making decisions about how they spent their time. We saw a range of good quality resources and equipment. These provided children with opportunities to create, explore, use their imagination, which stimulated curiosity and learning. Children were supported by staff to develop skills in understanding, thinking, investigation and problem solving through independent play.

Children's health and wellbeing was promoted through meaningful opportunities to engage in daily play outdoors, in the woods and the nursery garden.

Child protection training and refreshing staffs knowledge in this area had clearly impacted on their confidence in dealing with any situations that may arise. The team were fully aware of their responsibility to act quickly to protect children and keep them safe.

We observed snack and mealtimes and saw that these were pleasant, sociable and unhurried experiences where staff sat alongside children, providing encouragement and support where appropriate. Nurturing staff ensured children were provided with opportunities for rest, in accordance with parents wishes.

Sleep and rest opportunities were available and well managed for children of all ages. The older children enjoyed showing us the hammocks and outdoor areas where they liked to rest and enjoy quiet times.

## Requirements

**Number of requirements:** 0

## Recommendations

**Number of recommendations:** 0

**Grade:** 5 - very good

## Quality of environment

### Findings from the inspection

The environment was safe, well looked after, clean, tidy and well-maintained. The uncluttered rooms were well ventilated creating freshness throughout the nursery, reducing the potential of infection making a safe place for children.

Children's transitions took place safely in the garden. These were sensitively carried out by staff, with parental involvement. Staff shared their knowledge of the children with one another and this eased their transition from one group to the other. Transition sheets helped staff in the new room to get an insight into the child's needs etc, making transitions calm and smooth.

All children enjoyed playing and learning in the outdoors in their allocated areas. Herbs planted by the youngest children provided a sensory experience. Varying terrains, textures, trees and shrubs provided children with great opportunities for imaginative play, exploring and experimenting. For example, some children were excited to tell us how they were looking for bugs and putting them in a bottle as "Maclary was going to destroy the world," so they were escaping from it!

We found the atmosphere happy and busy, with engaging and stimulating activities. Children were able to direct their own play and be imaginative in their chosen peer groups. For example, children were "cooking snails" in the mud kitchen, participating in story telling and being creative in the craft shed. Others were responsible for making pizzas in the chimenea, which they ate for snack.

Children presented as being confident and well-engaged. A small group of children concentrated on drawing, mark-making and choosing colours for half an hour! Another small group of children playing pairs, celebrated one another's achievement shouting "hooray!" when cards were matched.

The wooded area was a recent addition to outdoor learning and provided a magical, creative, sensory and active space to play for the older children. This enclosed area was safe and provided good shade for children when out in the midday sun.

Appropriate outdoor hand washing facilities ensured children and staff could wash their hands, contributing towards their health and wellbeing. Hand sanitisers were also available, as was a shower if needed!

Children were happy to be outdoors. They experienced healthy picnic lunches in a pop up tent. Some inquisitive children came to ask us what we were doing. They keenly showed us around their forest pointing out the tyre swing and the hammocks where they could rest.

Two staff members were undertaking forest school training and were sharing their skills and knowledge with their colleagues.

Detailed risk assessments had been undertaken. From the sample we looked at, the forest area, fire pit and chimenea were included and provided clear guidance for staff. Children's involvement in assessing risk helped them to gain an understanding of danger and how to keep safe. Children commented: "Fire pit is hot" and "stay back from the fire pit."

## Requirements

**Number of requirements:** 0

## Recommendations

**Number of recommendations:** 0

**Grade:** 5 - very good

## Quality of staffing

### Findings from the inspection

Staffs passion for their roles in childcare was evident. They communicated well with each other and worked effectively as a team. This ensured children were well looked after and that the daily routines ran smoothly. Staff had built trusting relationships with both children and families.

Staff were appropriately deployed with sufficient staff working with children at all times. This contributed to ensuring that children were safe and their care needs were met. We found staff were skilled in describing the needs and interests of individual children and how they ensured that, as far as possible, these areas of interest and individual needs were met.

Effective procedures were in place to ensure staff were safely recruited. Children were included in the selection process with their views taken into account when appointing new staff. New staff were given the

right support from management and staff. This helped them to undertake their new role as more confident individuals joining the existing team. Management agreed to add the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) to the check list for new recruits, following safe recruitment guidance.

Staff were trained, competent and skilled. They were enthusiastic about developing new skills. They understood their professional responsibility to research learning opportunities that would maximise children's care and learning experience. Staff spoke confidently and knowledgeably about their learning and the impact this had on outcomes for children. Staff spoke about their very good team work and how well they supported each other. They found management and their room leaders supportive, approachable and knowledgeable.

Changes made to the nursery were well documented and shared. Focus groups had been established and were supported by the manager. The groups were tasked with carrying out regular evaluations of changes within the service, involving children and their families. This provided staff with an overview of where the service was at and improvements that needed to be actioned.

## Requirements

**Number of requirements:** 0

## Recommendations

**Number of recommendations:** 0

**Grade:** 5 - very good

## Quality of management and leadership

### Findings from the inspection

The manager had a very good overview of the service and was clear on aspects of the service that could be developed, whilst being aware of the strengths within the team.

Good communication between the manager and staff meant everyone was clear on their role and the expectations of the service. The staff team were given leadership opportunities and were encouraged to lead their own learning, using initiative and interests.

Staff meetings, discussions and formal appraisals took place to ensure there was open communication between the manager and staff and any improvements were agreed by the whole staff team and acted upon.

Training needs were identified and discussed with staff. Staff were supported to undertake further training to support their ongoing professional development. This contributed to ensuring children and their families received high quality care and support.

The manager discussed their continual development of quality assurance processes. The service has been using 'How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare' (HGIOELC) to evaluate the effectiveness of the provision, taking account of the Covid-19 situation. Peer reviews contributed to quality assurance. Staff from



the playrooms regularly undertook peer reviews, and were supported by the senior team as required. Action plans are developed thereafter, if required, to support individuals in their practice and care of the children.

Management provided evidence of the areas they looked at and the systems/procedures in place. This included in the self-evaluation programme, which involved staff, parents and children. This evidenced the service's commitment to improvement, listening to staff and those using the service to make a difference to the quality of children's experiences, staff moral and continuing professional development (CPD).

Management and staff took seriously the need to address the areas highlighted at the previous Covid-19 inspection. Improvement plans now highlighted agreed priorities. Support was sought from a range of personnel, for example, the infection control nurse and human resources (HR). Management took account of their expertise and included these professionals when formulating and agreeing strategies detailed in the action plan to bring forward improvements. Monitoring of these areas was ongoing and detailed in the plan. A detailed, comprehensive action plan had been developed and was used as a working document to record progress in taking forward areas identified following the Covid-19 Inspection.

The plan and progress had been evaluated between May and June 2021. It detailed the progress made, the impact, benefit and next steps. The overall outcome demonstrated how the actions impacted positively on children's experiences and outcomes and staff knowledge and practice.

## Requirements

**Number of requirements:** 0

## Recommendations

**Number of recommendations:** 0

**Grade:** 5 - very good

**What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection**

## Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.

## What the service has done to meet any recommendations we made at or since the last inspection

### Previous recommendations

#### Recommendation 1

Staff should be mindful of and ensure children's right to privacy and dignity.

**This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards which state that:**

'If I require intimate personal care, this is carried out in a dignified way, with my privacy and personal preferences respected.' (HSCS 1.4)

**This recommendation was made on 16 March 2021.**

#### Action taken on previous recommendation

We observed staff coordinating the use of the toilet areas to ensure there was no crossover of staff or children's use. This also allowed staff to carry out the necessary cleaning prior to the other playroom using the facilities. We saw how this area allowed children to have their privacy whilst having cream applied.

At lunchtime we observed a very tired child nearly dropping off to sleep whilst sitting at the table waiting for lunch. The staff member sitting at his table, noticed this and immediately asked another staff member to take her place whilst she took the child off to sleep in his bed. This ensured that the child's needs were met.

This recommendation has been met.

#### Recommendation 2

The manager and staff must ensure they consider, take account of and implement guidance that will reduce the risk of infection or cross contamination within the nursery.

**This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards which state that:**

'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.' (HSCS 4.11)

**This recommendation was made on 16 March 2021.**

#### Action taken on previous recommendation

We observed the toilet areas and found that these areas were clean and uncluttered. For example, potties which were not used were disposed of.

A new monitoring form had been implemented for staff to complete confirming that the areas remain clean and tidy.

Toilet brushes had been removed from all toilets in the nursery building. Management sought guidance re

appropriate toilet brushes from health and domestic professionals. As a result, disposable toilet brushes were installed safely, out with children's reach.

We found management had taken this area for improvement seriously and implemented other means of reducing the risk of infection and cross contamination within the nursery, which staff were aware of and carried out.

This recommendation has been met.

### Recommendation 3

The manager and staff must ensure they consider and take account of Scottish Government guidance that will support them in providing a safe environment for children and families during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards which state that:**

'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.' (HSCS 4.11)

**This recommendation was made on 16 March 2021.**

#### Action taken on previous recommendation

We observed the ways in which management took account of Scottish Government guidance to ensure they provided a safe environment for children and their families.

Examples include:

- Adapting lunchtime sittings and areas.
- Arranging dedicated areas for nappy changing and using the space between the two playrooms.
- Ensuring children are aware of their toilet area through symbols, ensuring children's awareness and understanding.
- Ensuring children and staff keep to the left in corridors.
- Staff wear masks.
- Implementing rotas for the use of cloakrooms.
- Establishing dedicated cohorts.
- Implementing safe drop off and collection procedures.
- Creating additional safe outdoor spaces for children to play and learn.

We observed staff cleaning throughout our visit and adhering to the above changes.

These changes are being monitored regularly to ensure their effectiveness.

This recommendation has been met.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Enforcement

No enforcement action has been taken against this care service since the last inspection.

## Inspection and grading history

| Date        | Type        | Gradings  |
|-------------|-------------|---|
| 31 Jul 2019 | Unannounced | <div>Care and support6 - Excellent</div> <div>EnvironmentNot assessed</div> <div>Staffing6 - Excellent</div> <div>Management and leadershipNot assessed</div>   |
| 20 Mar 2017 | Unannounced | <div>Care and support5 - Very good</div> <div>EnvironmentNot assessed</div> <div>StaffingNot assessed</div> <div>Management and leadership5 - Very good</div>   |
| 11 Feb 2015 | Unannounced | <div>Care and support5 - Very good</div> <div>Environment5 - Very good</div> <div>Staffing5 - Very good</div> <div>Management and leadership5 - Very good</div> |
| 14 Mar 2013 | Unannounced | <div>Care and support5 - Very good</div> <div>Environment4 - Good</div> <div>Staffing4 - Good</div> <div>Management and leadership4 - Good</div>                |
| 7 Jul 2010  | Unannounced | <div>Care and support5 - Very good</div> <div>EnvironmentNot assessed</div> <div>Staffing5 - Very good</div> <div>Management and leadershipNot assessed</div>   |
| 1 May 2009  | Unannounced | <div>Care and support4 - Good</div> <div>Environment5 - Very good</div> <div>Staffing5 - Very good</div> <div>Management and leadership5 - Very good</div>      |

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